

LEARN TO PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST CRIME

Cambridge prides itself in being a safe place to raise a family, go to work and attend school. Compared to cities of similar size and population nationwide, the crime rate in Cambridge consistently ranks below average in the majority of serious crime categories. (See the National and Regional Crime Comparison for more information, page 11). However, crime is a presence and a concern in all large cities and the safety of residents and visitors is of the utmost importance to the Cambridge Police Department. The following tips are provided to help residents, visitors and business owners learn to protect themselves and their property.

VIOLENT CRIME

PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST RAPE

- **Be aware of your surroundings when walking down the street.** Walk briskly and confidently.
- **At night, try to avoid walking alone, particularly after 9:00pm.** Stick to main streets with as much car and foot traffic as possible. Avoid public parks, areas with excessive trees and bushes, dark streets and alleys, and other “shortcuts.”
- **Keep an arm’s length away from strangers.** If you think someone suspicious is approaching you or following you, cross to the other side of the street and head for the nearest public place.
- **Know which stores and other public places are open along your route.** Whether walking home, to work, or jogging, try to vary your route frequently.
- **When streets are sparsely populated,** make brief eye contact with people as you pass them.
- **When parking at night, try to park in well-lit spots.** Lock your car door and, when returning to your car, have your keys ready.
- **Never hitchhike or pick up hitchhikers.**
- **Know the full name of each person you date,** his occupation, and where he lives.
- **Never invite a person whom you have met on the street,** in a bar, or in another public place to be alone with you.
- **If you are a victim of rape, report the crime.** Counseling, shelters, and other services are available for you, and you may prevent another person from being victimized.
- **The Cambridge Rape Crisis Center is available (617) 492-7273.** The Rape Crisis Center supports a 24-hour hotline, support groups, one-on-one

counseling, and community education programs. All its services are free.

- **The Cambridge Police Department offers a *Rape Aggression Defense (R.A.D.)* course** for women seeking to learn how to physically protect themselves against rape and other forms of violence. The course is free and is taught by a certified R.A.D. instructor. For more information, call the Cambridge Police Department’s Community Relations Department at (617) 349-6009.

PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST STREET ROBBERY

- **Try to avoid walking alone on the street after dark.** If you must walk alone at night, use well-lit roads, with as much car traffic as possible, and walk near the curb.
- **When streets are relatively empty,** make eye contact with everyone you pass, and keep yourself an arm’s length away from them. Walk briskly and confidently.
- **At night, avoid public parks,** vacant lots, and areas with excessive trees and bushes.
- **When waiting for a bus or subway, if the station is deserted,** keep your back against a wall in a well-lit section.
- **When walking to your car at night,** have your keys in your hand and be ready to open the door.
- **Try to avoid using ATMs late at night.** If you must, try to pick an ATM in an attended location, such as a supermarket or mall. At the very least, make sure the ATM is well lit, and be aware of

any people “loitering” in the area. Try to avoid going by yourself.

- **At home, before answering the door,** check the peephole or side window to make sure you know your visitor.
- **Keep your doors locked when driving your car.** If someone approaches your car while stopped, be prepared to step on the gas.
- **Don’t carry your purse loosely around your shoulder.** Clutch it tightly under your arm or, better yet, avoid carrying a purse and keep a wallet in your pocket instead.
- **If you *are* robbed, obey the robber’s instructions.** Keeping your cash in a separate money clip or pouch will allow you to hand it over without sacrificing your credit cards, identification, and personal papers.
- **Try to memorize your robber’s physical features, clothing, motor vehicle, and direction of flight.** Call the police from the nearest available telephone.

PROTECTING BUSINESSES AGAINST ROBBERY

(This information was found at http://crime.about.com/od/prevent/qt/prevent_robbery.htm)

- Have at least **two employees** open and close the business.
- Keep purses and personal valuables locked in desks or lockers.
- Install a robbery alarm.
- **Place a surveillance camera** behind the cash register facing the front counter. Replace videotapes regularly.
- **Vary times** and routes of travel for bank deposits.
- **Don't use marked "moneybags"** that make it obvious to would-be robbers you are carrying money for deposit.
- **Keep a low balance** in the cash register.
- Place **excess money** in a safe or deposit it as soon as possible.
- **Cooperate with the robber** for your own safety and the safety of others. Comply with a robber's demands. Remain calm and think clearly. **Make mental notes of the robber's physical description and other observations important to law enforcement officers.**
- **If you have a silent alarm** and can reach it without being noticed, use it. Otherwise, wait until the robber leaves.
- Be careful, most robbers are just as nervous as you are.

- **Stay alert!** Know who is in your business and where they are. Watch for people who hang around without buying anything. Also, be aware of suspicious activity outside your place of business. Write down license numbers of suspicious vehicles if visible from the inside of your business.
- **Make sure the sales counter can be seen clearly.** Don't put up advertisements, flyers, displays, signs, posters or other items on windows or doors that might obstruct the view of the register from inside or outside your business. The police cruising by your store need to see in.
- **Try to greet customers as they enter your business.** Look them in the eye, and ask them if they need help. Your attention can discourage a robber.
- **Keep your business well-lit,** inside and outside. Employees should report any burned-out lights to the business owner or manager. Keep trees and bushes trimmed, so they don't block any outdoor lights. Encourage the police to stop by your business.
- Learn the names of the officers who patrol your business.
- **Use care after dark.** Be cautious when cleaning the parking lot or taking out the trash at night. Make sure another employee inside the business keeps you within eye contact while you are involved in work details outside of your building.
- **If you see something suspicious, call the police.** Never try to handle it yourself. It could cost you your life.
- **Handle cash carefully.** Avoid making your business a tempting target for robbers. Keep the amount of cash in registers low. Drop all large bills right away. If a customer tries to pay with a large bill, politely ask if he or she has a smaller one. Explain that you keep very little cash on hand.
- **Use only one register at night.** Leave other registers empty and open. Tilt the register drawer to show there is no money in it.
- **Leave blinds and drapes partially open** during closing hours.
- **Make sure important signs stay posted.** For example, the front door should bear signs that say, "Clerk Cannot Open the Time Lock Safe."
- **If your business is robbed put your safety first.** Your personal safety is more important than money or merchandise.
- **Don't talk** except to answer the robber's questions.
- Don't stare directly at the robber.
- Prevent surprises, keep your hands in sight at all times. Don't make any sudden moves.

- Don't chase or follow the robber out of your place of business. **Leave the job of catching the robber to the police.**

PREVENTING ASSAULT

- Check out the tips for preventing rape and street robbery to prevent unprovoked, "street" assaults.
- If you have been abused by, or are in fear of, your domestic partner or spouse, get help. The problem usually becomes worse if it is not addressed. The "domestic crimes" section of this report lists telephone numbers that you or your partner can call to seek assistance.
- Report assault when it happens, even if you do not believe it to be "serious." Assaults that are not reported cannot be considered by police administrators when they make decisions about

how to allocate manpower and funds; if there is a problem with a bar, a household, a school, or any other place where assaults are likely to happen, *the police need to know about it.*

- Do *not* allow yourself to be drawn into arguments about traffic or parking incidents. Keep calm when behind the wheel of your car. If another driver commits a violation or threatens you, take down his registration information and report it to the police. Hundreds of people are killed each year because of "road rage."
- Unless they have security forces for that purpose, shop managers and clerks should not attempt to physically detain shoplifters. Most of the "Shop Owner/Patron" assaults began as shoplifting incidents. Instead, get a full description of the shoplifter and call the police. If he refuses to stay, let him go.

PROPERTY CRIME

PREVENTING AUTO THEFT

(This list is provided courtesy of Autotheftinfo.com)

- **Always take your keys.** Never leave them in the car. Nearly 20% of all vehicles stolen had the keys in them.
- **Always lock your car.** Approximately 50% of all vehicles stolen were left unlocked.
- **Never hide a second set of keys in your car.** Extra keys can easily be found if a car thief takes time to look.
- **Park in well-lit areas.** Over half of all vehicle thefts occur at night.
- **Park in attended lots.** Auto thieves tend to avoid potential witnesses and prefer unattended parking lots.
- **If you park in an attended lot, leave only the ignition/door key.** If your trunk and glove box use the same key as the door, have one of them changed. Don't give the attendant easy access to your glove box and trunk. Upon returning, check the tires, spare and battery to insure they are the same as those you had when you parked.
- **Never leave your car running, even if you will only be gone for a minute.** Vehicles are commonly stolen at convenience stores, gas stations, ATM's, etc. Many vehicles are also stolen on cold mornings when the owner leaves the vehicle running to warm up.

- **Don't leave valuables in plain view.** Don't make your car a more desirable target by leaving valuables in plain sight.
- **When parking in a garage, lock the garage door and your vehicle.** By locking both the garage and vehicle doors, the chances of deterring a thief greatly improve.
- **Don't leave the registration or title in your car.** A car thief will use these to sell your stolen car. File the title at your home or office, and carry registration in your purse or wallet.
- **Vehicle Identification Number (VIN).** Stolen cars/parts are more easily traced when vehicle VIN numbers have been etched on car windows and major parts. ID stickers (<http://www.IDsticker.com>) include VINs and can assist police in identifying your vehicle in the event that it is stolen.
- **Alarms.** Loud warnings sound when doors/hood/trunk are opened. Optional sensors include glass breakage, motion, tampering and towing. Panic buttons, back-up batteries, flashing parking lights or headlights, and automatic engine disable features are also recommended.

PREVENTING COMMERCIAL BURGLARY

- **Light all entrances**, including alleys, with vandal-proof fixtures. Leave inside lights on overnight and on weekends.
- **Glass doors** should be made from burglar-resistant glass and should be well lit.
- **Keep weeds, shrubbery, and debris away from doors and windows.** Lock up tools and ladders that could invite a break or make a burglar's job easier.
- **Install an alarm system**, check it regularly, and investigate reasons behind any false alarms. Post a conspicuous notice that you have an alarm system.
- **Leave empty cash drawers open after hours.** Use a burglar-resistant safe; don't trust a fire safe to keep burglars out.
- **Request a Cambridge Police Department Commercial Security Survey**, which provides a general assessment of the vulnerability of your business. For more information, call (617) 349-3236.

PREVENTING RESIDENTIAL BURGLARY

- Try **"casing" your own home, at night and during the day.** Attempt to gain access to your home when the doors and windows are locked and "secure." Make sure you have some identification on you in case your neighbors call the police.
- **Doors should be made from strong wood or metal and should be locked with a deadbolt.** Install guards on windows that prevent them from being raised more than a few inches.
- If you live in an apartment building that has a main entryway, make sure that security is enforced at the main door. **Never prop open the door or let someone in behind you.** Report residents who do this to your landlord.
- **When you go away**, even for the evening, leave a light or two on (perhaps on a timer) as well as the television or radio.
- Keep a small amount of cash on a table near your main door. If the money is gone when you come home, you will know immediately that someone has been in your residence.
- **Consider buying motion sensor lights** outside your home and out of reach so the burglars cannot unscrew the light. Also, buy variable light timers to activate lights in your home.
- **Request a Cambridge Police Department Residential Security Survey**, which provides a general assessment of the vulnerability of your

residence. For more information, call (617) 349-6009.

PREVENTING LARCENIES FROM BUILDINGS

- **Office buildings should develop a comprehensive security policy involving all employees.** The policy should include a prohibition against leaving expensive equipment—particularly laptop computers—unattended. Employees should be encouraged to question suspicious or unfamiliar people, or to report them to the security department.
- **Don't leave expensive personal property in health club lockers.** A better solution is a "fanny pack" or other strap-on carrier that you can keep with you at all times.
- **Retail establishments should provide individual lockers, with locks, for employee property.** Leaving it behind the counter or in a "back room" is an invitation for theft.
- **Take extreme care of your personal property while shopping and dining.** Keep it in sight, and never leave it unattended, not even for a minute.
- **Report all thefts, no matter how minor, to the police department.** Greater reporting will allow us to identify and attack patterns and series of crime.

PREVENTING LARCENIES FROM MOTOR VEHICLES

- The best and really only way to prevent larcenies from motor vehicles is **never to leave valuables in your car unattended**—particularly electronic goods such as cellular telephones and laptop computers. Preventing the theft of car radios is more difficult; some car stereo manufacturers make detachable faceplates or stereos that pull easily from the dashboard, allowing you to take it with you or lock it in the trunk.
- **Parking your car in a driveway or lot** rather than on the street provides some minimal deterrence.

PREVENTING BICYCLE THEFT

- The facts are grim: **no lock will stop a determined bicycle thief.** However, using a lock is better than not using a lock, and you can maximize the protection a lock provides by: 1) using a steel "U" lock rather than a cable lock; 2)

locking the *frame* of the bicycle rather than the tire; and 3) locking your bike at a bicycle rack.

- **Register your bicycle with the Cambridge Police Department.** If your bike is stolen and recovered, it will be easier to find you and return your bicycle. Registration cards are available at the Cambridge Police Department and at bicycle shops across the city. Call 349-3236 for more information.
- **Removing an essential part of the bicycle, such as the seat or one of the wheels, and taking it with you provides some protection against theft.** *Don't* assume your bicycle is safe because it is in your yard, on your porch, or in your apartment hallway. Bikes should be locked in a secured area, such as a garage or shed.

PREVENTING SHOPLIFTING

- **Greet and serve customers promptly.** Shoplifters do not want your attention.
- **If you suspect someone has “pocketed” merchandise,** engage them in conversation for a few minutes. They may “ditch” the merchandise as soon as you leave them alone.
- **Sales personnel should have a full view of the sales floor area.** Rearrange displays, shelving, and lighting to eliminate blind spots.
- Keep displays neat and tidy.
- Be aware of people wearing loose, baggy clothing, carrying shopping bags or large handbags, or customers under the influence of drugs and alcohol.
- **Request a commercial survey** from one of the Cambridge Police Department’s certified Crime Prevention Officers at 617-349-6009.

PREVENTING FRAUD

- Banks are swiftly replacing standard ATM Cards with “Check Cards”—credit cards that deduct directly from your checking account. These check cards, while convenient, present a security problem. Thieves no longer need your Personal Identification Number (PIN) to use the card; if a thief uses it like a credit card, he can drain your entire account by just forging your signature on credit card slips. If your ATM Card has a credit card logo (such as Visa or MasterCard) on it, it can be used like a credit card. If you do not want this feature, notify your bank and have them send you an ATM-only card.
- Keep your credit card numbers, and the telephone numbers of your credit card companies, at home and work. If your cards are stolen, call these numbers immediately and report the theft.
- Try to avoid carrying more credit cards than you need at one time.

- Never write your ATM card PIN number on the card or on a slip of paper in your wallet or purse.
- Protect your cards against theft in the first place; see the prevention tips under this “Property Crime” section.
- Merchants should implement and enforce a policy of requiring a photographic identification when using a check or credit card.

Learn to recognize potential fraud scenarios. Any of the following activities almost certainly involves a scam:

- Someone approaches you on the street claiming to have found money.
- Any circumstance in which you have to pay money in order to get money.
- Someone comes to your door, without notification, claiming to work for the gas company, electric company, water company, or cable company. Always ask for official identification and call the utility company to make sure the identification is valid. Do not let “utility impostors” into your home.
- You receive an unsolicited telephone call from someone offering a great deal on some piece of merchandise.
- You’re notified in the mail that you’ve won a prize, but you have to pay money in order to claim it.

PREVENT LAPTOP THEFT

- If a stranger approaches you and offers you a laptop for less than face value, alter the police – the laptop is almost certainly stolen.
- Register the laptop with the company and keep receipts with needed information, such as serial numbers. If your laptop is stolen and recovered, this information will be essential to reclaim the item.
- Do not leave your laptop visible inside your motor vehicle. In a significant number of larcenies from motor vehicles, the offender sees the valuable property inside the car before deciding to break in.
- If you run a business, do not give keys out to individuals who do not absolutely need them. As previously mentioned, employees are often the suspects when laptops are stolen from businesses. Also, use cables or other protective measures to keep the machines more secure.